



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee supports the Indian Country Criminal Justice initiative at Northern Arizona University



PHOTO: Law and Order Committee members meeting with Northern Arizona University officials to discuss the Indian Country Criminal Justice initiative at NAU in Flagstaff, Arizona on May 9, 2017.

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – On Tuesday, the Law and Order Committee met with Northern Arizona University's Department of Applied Indigenous Studies, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, and tribal leaders from Kaibab Paiute Tribe and Havasupai Tribe to discuss the Indian Country Criminal Justice initiative at NAU.

The initiative proposes to establish an undergraduate major in Indian Country Criminal Justice to help the Navajo Nation and southwest tribes improve the educational qualifications of public safety employees and to draw students that are interested in pursuing a profession in criminal justice or related fields of study.

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), stated that he supports the initiative due to the overwhelming needs for public safety on the Navajo Nation and the lack of adequate resources.

"The Nation's criminal justice system does need improvements in the areas of performance and policy. The Law and Order Committee has the responsibility to recommend the appointment of

judges, police chief, and public safety director. This program can assist by producing qualified applicants. I support the initiative because it will invest in our employees and younger students,” stated Delegate Begay.

Vice president of NAU Native American Initiatives Dr. Chad H. Hamill, stated that the university has reached out to Diné College, Navajo Technical University, and other tribal educational institutions to establish a partnership to maximize educational opportunities, which includes the Indian Country Criminal Justice initiative.

The university also requested the committee’s support to have the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Assistance to set aside funds for financial aid for Navajo students who will major in the Indian Country Criminal Justice program.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) stated that the Nation has previously supported NAU students pursuing a criminal justice degree.

“I am in full support of the initiative because our Nation does need educated police officers. This will also open many doors for our employees to pursue higher positions within our public safety division and the judicial branch. The Council has supported NAU before and we can do it again,” stated Delegate Smith.

In 1997, the Intergovernmental Relations Committee of the Navajo Nation Council approved an agreement between the Navajo Nation, Office of the Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Assistance, Division of Diné Education, and NAU to fund Navajo students participating in the bachelor degree program in criminal justice cohort program for a two-year contract period in the amount of \$80,000.

“I commend NAU for starting this initiative for Indian Country. Our tribal criminal justice systems need critical attention and this program will allow the expertise to overcome many obstacles and challenges,” stated LOC member Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi).

LOC member Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr. (Shonto, Naa’tsis’Áán, Oljato, Ts’ah Bii Kin) recommended for the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, Diné College, Navajo Technical University, Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, Navajo Chief of Police, and Navajo Nation Judicial Branch to attend the next meeting in June regarding the initiative.

The Indian Country Criminal Justice program is anticipated to begin in Fall 2018.

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